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New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.

High-level plenary meeting, to be known as the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit

Agenda item 66

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Draft resolution (A/73/L.1)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): This high-level plenary meeting is held in accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/243 of 22 December 2017, and takes place under agenda item 66, entitled "Peacebuilding and sustaining peace".

I warmly welcome everyone to this high-level meeting, which will focus on global peace in honour of the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela.

The General Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/73/L.1, entitled "Political declaration adopted at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit". Before proceeding further, I would like to inform Members that action on the draft political declaration will be taken at the end of this opening meeting.

I would now like to make a statement.

It is an honour for me to be here today to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela, one of the greatest leaders of our time. He was a leader who taught us that it is possible to forgive and for reconciliation and peace to prevail over hate and vengeance. I would like to acknowledge the presence at today's meeting of Dr. Helena Ndume of Namibia, who was one of the first-ever laureates of the Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize, along with the former President of Portugal Jorge Sampaio, who, regrettably, could not be here with us today. Their efforts to provide inclusive access to health and education are an inspiration and honour Nelson Mandela's legacy in today's world.

Today the extraordinary legacy of Nelson Mandela is stronger than ever, five years after his death. Mandela was always guided by the founding principles of the United Nations. He exemplified the values of peace, solidarity, cooperation and respect for all human beings, regardless of their colour, political views or religious beliefs. Mandela himself once said,

> "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others".

I had the privilege of meeting President Mandela in Johannesburg in 2002 during the Rio+10 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Madiba's love for South Africa shone in his eyes. His profound respect for human dignity permeated his interaction with those around him. Mandela refused to accept the injustices of his time, and it is for that reason that his legacy represents a beacon of hope for a world still ravaged by conflict and suffering.

The threat of the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons still looms large. Tensions between nuclear-weapon States, territorial disputes, ethnic divisions and the oppression of minorities persist. This bleak outlook poses a serious threat to peace and security

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that we must tackle and resolve together. We are at a point where certain principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations have been called into question. The very principle of multilateralism is being challenged. There are fears about our ability to take collective action to address the world's most pressing issues, such as poverty and hunger, climate change, conflict and war. A move away from multilateralism would jeopardize the future of humankind and of our planet. The world needs a social contract based on shared responsibility, and the only forum we have for achieving that global compact is the United Nations. That is why this year I am calling for us to recommit to its founding principles and to multilateralism. And the General Assembly is the most representative and legitimate forum we have for dialogue and reconciliation aimed at building collective peace and security.

The draft political declaration (A/73/L.1) we will adopt today, thanks to the commitment of States and the wise leadership of South Africa and Ireland, is a demonstration of the central role played by the Assembly in achieving global agreements on peace and security around the world.

The Nelson Mandela peace declaration represents a relaunching of our commitment to peace and a renewal of States' willingness to build a peaceful, prosperous, inclusive and fair world. It calls on us to reflect on the thousands of victims of conflicts in the world who need immediate help from us, the States. The declaration reaffirms our commitment to the sovereignty and sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

Respect for the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples represents a starting point for maintaining peace and harmony among nations. It is clear that we can uphold and respect the self-determination and sovereignty of our countries while also committing to collective and coordinated action to build more peaceful, sustainable and resilient societies. As Madiba knew, there can be no peace if there are still millions of people without access to quality education, health care or decent work, and if there is still hunger and suffering. But that requires strong global leadership, which is so well represented in this Hall this morning.

It is an honour for me to preside over the General Assembly as we adopt a declaration that will undoubtedly give hope to the world and that further reaffirms that it is only through multilateralism and its clearest expression — the United Nations Organization — that it will be possible to achieve the peace and security to which we aspire in order to achieve development and prosperity.

There are many challenges we face in achieving peace, and we must ask ourselves how we are going to address them. Whether we do it together, or alone and divided, the answer is entirely up to us. Personally, I believe that we should always choose to walk together on the path of peace. There is no other option. In Mandela's words, "It always seems impossible until it is done." As a Latin American poet said, "Some people transcend death." Madiba's gentle, profound gaze and serene strength, which transformed violence into peace and aggression into forgiveness, are more alive today than ever.

I warmly welcome everyone to this high-level meeting.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: Nelson Mandela was one of humankind's great leaders. He embodied the highest values of the United Nations. He devoted his life to serving his community — as a lawyer, a prisoner of conscience, a peacemaker, a president and a respected elder. He cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all people live together in equality and harmony. That was a bedrock cause for which he was prepared to fight and die. He faced his oppressors in court, knowing they had the power of life and death, and he refused to back down. As a political prisoner, he steadfastly refused to allow his dignity to be undermined, and he became a rallying point for a global movement that led to the dismantling of the apartheid regime. The role played by the United Nations is a milestone in our proud history.

As President of South Africa, Madiba championed women's rights and South Africa's landmark 1996 Constitution, which remains a beacon for human rights and equal opportunity. Under his leadership, South Africa expanded access to health care, education, housing, water, sanitation and electricity. Beyond South Africa's borders, Madiba was a profound influence for peace and democracy. In Burundi, for example, he played a key role in brokering the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, and everywhere he was a champion for peace, forgiveness, humility, com ,sion, dignity and human rights.

This year we mark the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Almost exactly 20 years ago, Nelson Mandela spoke about that landmark document in this Hall (see A/53/PV.7). He urged all leaders to have the courage to ensure that eventually we can build a human world consistent with the provisions of that historic Declaration. Those were the words of Nelson Mandela. Today, with human rights under growing pressure around the world, we would be well served by reflecting on the example of this outstanding man. We must face the forces that threaten us with the wisdom, courage and fortitude that Nelson Mandela embodied. That is the only way to build the just, peaceful and prosperous world envisioned in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Madiba was a global citizen whose legacy must continue to guide us. To honour that legacy, the Government of South Africa has generously donated a statue of Madiba that I was honoured to unveil this morning. In 2015, the United Nations also decided to award the Nelson Mandela Prize every five years to two individuals who have made significant contributions to the service of humankind. The first recipients were Namibian philanthropic eye surgeon Helena Ndume and my good friend Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal. Each year, we also observe Nelson Mandela International Day by promoting and engaging in community service. Today we remember a man of great wisdom, quiet dignity and towering achievement who worked tirelessly for peace and human dignity for people everywhere. That is our Organization's purpose and, as leaders, it is our responsibility. Let us commit to building on Nelson Mandela's legacy so that all people everywhere can enjoy peace, prosperity and inclusive and sustainable development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/243, I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Mr. Mahamat (African Union) (*spoke in French*): The life, struggle, work and symbolic significance of Nelson Mandela go beyond our imaginings. His life was one of unparalleled riches and will remain the embodiment of fulfilled abundance. Words will never be adequate to describe him. As we all know, he shone his light in this Hall and in every corner of our planet where the thirst for peace, freedom and equality drained people's spirits and haunted humankind.

In January 2014, in remembrance of all that and many other things, the Summit of Heads of State of the African Union decided to declare 2014-2024 the Nelson Mandela Decade in Africa. In that regard, in January 2018 the thirtieth Summit of Heads of State and Government agreed to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela this year. Subsequently, the July 2018 Summit supported holding the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit on the margins of the current session of the General Assembly. In the same spirit, on 22 December 2017, the General Assembly decided to convene a high-level plenary meeting on peace to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela.

The United Nations and the African Union have once again come together with enthusiasm to commemorate and honour the centenary of the birth of a giant of the modern history of Africa and the world, who matured through suffering, hardship and adversity and who dedicated his wisdom, his courage, his intelligence, his thought, his ethics, his humanism and all his faith to the freedom and dignity of humankind in all their nobility and morality, not only for the black man but for man and his place in relation to history and for history in relation to man.

Today we are commemorating the centenary of his birth. While we mourn his physical loss, we are also proud to have had him as a supreme symbol of the African man and an inexhaustible source of inspiration for all generations. The true hallmarks of Madiba are not only his tenacity, courage and determination, or his ability to transcend human fragilities as he described them — egotism, vengefulness and the inability to forgive — but above all his dedication and commitment to humanism and the universal. He has gone down in history, he made history and he has made African history everlasting. At a time when multilateralism is suffering attacks from all sides, through selfishness, intolerance, withdrawal and rejection of those different from us, the commemoration of Madiba's centenary resounds in our lives as an intense call for freedom, solidarity and peace among humankind.

What would he have said today in the light of all the challenges and anxieties we are facing? He would certainly have told us not to yield to fatalism or to

abandon our struggle for life. He would certainly not have told us to resolve our conflicts with fire and the sword, nor with hatred, exclusion, repression or the oppression of others. On the contrary, he would have urged us to redouble our efforts to dare to fight and to win.

At this emotionally charged moment in this high-level meeting of the world's decision-makers, I would like to voice the full commitment of the African Union and Africa to the universal values that Madiba embodied, which are his legacy and for which he gave the best of himself for eternity. Our tribute to an immortal icon also sends a vivid message of our esteem and respect for all the fighters for freedom everywhere in the world. In that regard, we are pleased to see that the heirs of that great man in the rainbow nation that he brought forth, South Africa — and beyond it, in the rest of Africa and throughout the world — remain passionately committed to his universal message and more determined than ever to carry on his legacy. May the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit represent a decisive step in establishing genuine peace in the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*) I thank Mr. Mahamat for his statement.

In accordance with decision 72/564 B, of 13 September 2018, I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa.

President Ramaphosa: On behalf of the Mandela family and the people of South Africa, allow me to express our humble appreciation to the United Nations for convening this special Summit in honour of the founding President of our democracy, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

In 1994, during his inaugural address to the General Assembly, President Mandela said,

> "The great challenge of our age to the United Nations is to answer the question 'Given the interdependence of the nations of the world, what is it that we can and must do to ensure that democracy, peace and prosperity prevail everywhere?'" (*A/49/PV.14, pp.8-9*)

The signing of the Charter of the United Nations took place more than 70 years ago, in a world different from ours today. It was a world still reeling from the clash of great Powers in the Second World War that cost the lives of close to 5 per cent of the world's population at the time. It was from that collective trauma that the United Nations was born. Countries sought to reimagine a world where nations would cooperate rather than clash, and where friendly relations would lead to social progress, peace and development and a better life for all. For those noble ideas to be realized, however, they needed to find expression in the actions of those taking up the mantle of leadership at the most trying of times.

One such leader was born in the small village of Mvezo, in the eastern part of South Africa, in 1918. He would come to represent the hopes of millions of South Africans who dreamed of a life unshackled from a system that limited their potential and stifled their possibilities based merely on the colour of their skin. The story of South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy, and the role played in it by Nelson Mandela, is well known. It is a story of humankind's great capacity for goodness, peace and hope. It was also that capacity that led to the establishment of the United Nations, which served as an important platform for the anti-apartheid movement and which continues to be a platform for other struggles against oppression, war and global injustice. Since the formation of the United Nations, the world has faced many crises that have tested the limits of diplomacy and the multilateral system. Throughout those crises, the United Nations has endured as a force for stability, cooperation and the peaceful resolution of conflict.

While much has been done to ensure that the world will never go to war against itself again, the Organization has nonetheless continued to face more intricate and complex challenges. Over the past seven decades, millions of people worldwide have been killed, some maimed and others displaced, and many have starved as a result of war and conflicts. Women and children continue to bear a disproportionate burden of those troubles. While we have managed to avoid another world war, we have continued to grapple with the haunting spectre of modern atrocities such as the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica. We are confronting intra-State armed conflicts in Syria, South Sudan and Yemen, protracted turmoil in a number of parts of Africa and struggles for self-determination in Western Sahara and Palestine. They show that the current threats to international peace and security are more the result of conflicts within States and the effects that they have across nations that have become increasingly interdependent, rather than of traditional conflicts between States.

Terrorism, transnational organized crime, illicit flows of finance and growing numbers of refugees pose significant threats to global order and peace. No longer can we ignore the troubles of those in distant parts of the world, or fail to address the root causes of conflicts that we often imagine are foreign to us. To respond to those threats, we need a United Nations that is responsive, adaptable and also able to deal with challenges that its founders could not have imagined. It should not rely merely on the political interests of a few, as an impasse between the major Powers often impedes the entire Organization's ability to act. Instead, we should draw on the strength of the collective in resolving complex challenges. The United Nations can succeed only to the degree that we, as global leaders, provide visionary leadership that transcends our ideological differences and narrow national interests.

Through this Peace Summit, the current generation of global leadership has been given a wonderful opportunity not only to reflect on peace in the world, but also to take the measures necessary to end the wars that continue to take millions of innocent lives. We are called on to act decisively to end the exposure of women and children to untold suffering, including displacement, torture, rape, mutilation and murder. We are called on to ensure that women are afforded a special role in peace negotiations, political transitions and in ensuring durable security for all. We must be unanimous in our support for the work of the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women in ensuring that women take centre stage on issues of peace and security and provide leadership in peace operations. We welcome efforts to achieve the equal representation of women in leadership positions in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

In our search for peace, we dare not ignore the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction, whose capacity for human devastation is too dreadful to contemplate. Twenty years ago almost to the day, President Mandela addressed the General Assembly for the last time. He said,

> "We must ask the question, which might sound naive to those who have elaborated sophisticated arguments to justify their refusal to eliminate these terrible and terrifying weapons of mass destruction — why do they need them, anyway?" (*A/53/PV.7, p.14*)

To this day, his question has been met with no satisfactory answer. The truth is that there can be no justification for the existence of weapons that carry with them the potential to extinguish life on this planet. We therefore applaud the adoption by the General Assembly last year of the groundbreaking Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. South Africa will soon deposit its instrument of ratification of that historic Treaty. We call on all peace-loving States to ratify the Treaty so that it comes into force without any delay.

As we strive for peace, we cannot escape the reality that conflict and hostility have their roots in poverty, exclusion and marginalization. Unless we confront the conditions under which the poor of the world live, we will not succeed in building a peaceful and stable world. It is for that reason that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is also very much an agenda for peace. The Sustainable Development Goals entail a set of interdependent objectives whose fulfilment would be the ultimate act of conflict prevention. We must ensure that the United Nations — in its form, operation and orientation — is able to maintain international peace and security, protect human rights and achieve sustainable development for all.

Today we are gathered as world leaders, representing the hopes of billions for a peaceful, prosperous world. It was the desire for such a world that prompted this Peace Summit, with a view to taking stock of how the United Nations has performed in the pursuit of peace. It provides a moment for us as Heads of State and Government to recommit to achieving the social and economic development necessary for the prevention of conflict. It is an opportunity to pledge to one another and to our peoples our determination to seek peaceful solutions to our political differences and to build peace in those countries emerging from the destruction of war, violence and the perpetuation of hate. It is our deepest hope that this Summit, in the name of one of our greatest exemplars of humankind, Nelson Mandela, can serve as a new dawn for the United Nations.

We hope the Summit will give expression to the Secretary-General's call for a surge in diplomacy. We hope we will rediscover the strength of will to save successive generations from war and to overcome the hatred of our past and the narrow interests that blind us to the vision of a common future that is peaceful and prosperous. We hope we will prove ourselves worthy as the bearers of the legacy of Nelson Mandela.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President of South Africa for his statement.

In accordance with decision 72/564 B, I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Leo Varadkar, Taoiseach and Minister of Defence of Ireland.

Mr. Varadkar (Ireland): It is my great honour to join the General Assembly today as we adopt the draft Nelson Mandela political declaration (A/73/L.1). It reminds us that Mandela's is a living legacy, entrusted to us so we can be torchbearers for peace and reconciliation for this and future generations.

Side by side with our great friends from South Africa, Ireland was privileged to co-facilitate the work that has led to today's Political Declaration. Together with everyone here today, I reaffirm that Ireland will continue to uphold the ideals and values of the United Nations and work with the international community to achieve the aims that Mandela himself worked for so tirelessly during his lifetime. In Mandela's story we recognize the struggles and triumphs of one individual and the challenges and hope for humankind. His fight for freedom and dignity for all — irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, colour or creed — spoke to our vision of a common humanity and proved that the seemingly impossible can indeed become a reality. It was reflected in South Africa's first democratic Constitution, which is a template for new democracies today.

This year in Ireland we mark 20 years of the Good Friday Agreement, which after decades of bitter violence brought peace to Britain and Ireland, closer cooperation between north and south and power-sharing in Northern Ireland — at least most of the time. The Northern Ireland peace process was advanced with the wisdom and assistance of friends from around the world, including President Ramaphosa, and for that we will always be grateful. We have witnessed firsthand the profound truths that Nelson Mandela showed through his wisdom and through his actions: that violent conflict is not inevitable and can be ended; that peace is made not with one's friends but with one's enemies; that reconciliation is achieved by moving beyond the hurt and pain of the past towards truth and forgiveness and, perhaps most profoundly of all, that through justice and forgiveness we can free the prisoner and free the jailer as well.

Twenty-eight years ago, just months after he was released from prison, on an occasion etched in my memory as a young boy who watched it on television, Nelson Mandela was accorded the special honour of being invited to speak to the Irish Parliament. There he inspired us all with his words as he attacked the arrogance of racism and honoured those who dared to cry freedom. In our native Irish language, we say of truly remarkable individuals: *Ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís*, which means "We will never see his like again". I can think of no better way to describe the uniqueness of Mandela. I believe that his legacy is truly international and points to a deeper truth. A voice may be silenced by death, but its message can never be suppressed. It is heard for all time and rings through the ages, and it finds a home in the hearts, minds and values of those who follow after.

Inspired by the message of Nelson Mandela again, we in this Hall should provide a voice for the oppressed around the world and find shared solutions guided by shared values, such as our belief in and commitment to multilateralism, to the freedom of the individual, free enterprise, human rights, democracy and the protection of our planet. We should look to this declaration as we face the challenges of the twenty-first century. Recognizing all that is being done in the area of gender discrimination, we must renew our efforts to further advance gender equality around the world, and we must give young people a greater say in the decisions that will affect them and the future of our planet.

War and hatred come in many guises, but peace has the same face the world over. It is the image of those who open their hearts and minds to make the impossible possible and build a future worth living for.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Varadkar for his statement.

In accordance with resolution 72/243, I now give the floor to Ms. Graça Machel, co-founder of The Elders.

Ms. Machel (The Elders): It is my singular honour to address this collective home of the human family. I would like to thank President Espinosa Garcés and Secretary-General Guterres for calling this special meeting to celebrate Nelson Mandela's life and his legacy of peacemaking. I thank the General Assembly for this privilege. I stand here not as a diplomat, but as a human rights advocate and concerned citizen of the world, so forgive me in advance for the unrestrained manner in which I will share my frank thoughts with the Assembly today.

Today's celebration of the legacy of Nelson Mandela, or Madiba, as he was affectionately known, provides an appropriate opportunity to reflect on the very raison d'être of the United Nations. In October 1945, the founding members of the United Nations made this pledge, first and foremost, in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

It strikes me with gratifying humility that, at this moment of reflection, we associate Nelson Mandela as a reference point to help guide us in fulfilling that supreme mandate. Indeed, Madiba's legacy as a freedom fighter, peacemaker and statesman speaks to the core of our greatest aspirations for the United Nations and for humankind. The purpose of this celebration of Madiba's life and his contributions to the world is twofold — to take inspiration from the values he embodies and to emulate his unwavering commitment to freedom, equality, justice and dignity for all.

Let me pause here and bring to mind the legacy of Kofi Annan, my dear brother and fellow Elder, who also embodied the values that the United Nations holds dear. His moral fortitude and commitment to justice should also serve as an inspiration to shape the international community into a more stable, peaceful and equitable one.

The United Nations finds itself at a moment when it would be well served by revisiting and reconnecting to the vision of its founders, as well as by taking direction from Madiba's servant leadership and courage. His example of servant leadership reminds us that no sacrifice is too great to ensure the respect and protection of one's people. He deeply believed that there is nothing more sacred than safeguarding the rights of all human beings — not the preservation of ego, not partisan politics and not geopolitical considerations.

An expert in brinkmanship and a keen strategist, Madiba spent nearly three decades of his life as a political prisoner, and many years thereafter negotiating the complexities of peacemaking and nation-building. We seek inspiration from his successful approach. While staying true to his ultimate goal of freedom and social justice, he took the interests of his adversaries into consideration. He silenced his ego and took risks. He gave value to the principle of give-and-take and negotiated in good faith.

The United Nations was shaped by our collective desire to prevent conflict and ensure that never again would war engulf nations the world over. Yet more than 70 years later, today's newsreels are full of conflict-ridden headlines, signalling significant discord within our international community. Global security has deteriorated markedly over recent decades. The number of armed conflicts has increased, and the protracted conflicts that have been ravaging our global family for decades are particularly worrisome to me. Our collective consciousness must reject the lethargy that has accustomed us to death and violence as if wars were legitimate and somehow impossible to terminate. There is no justification for the loss of life and suffering in places such as Syria, Yemen, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Myanmar, to mention just a few. That has been going on far too long.

Thousands of our children, just like our own sons and daughters, have been robbed of the joys of childhood. Thousands of women, no different from our own sisters and mothers, have been brutalized by rape as a weapon of war. Thousands of our brothers and sisters have been needlessly maimed or killed. Thousands of families similar to our own have been ripped apart and left destitute. It is time to say "enough is enough".

I appeal to the members of the General Assembly not to let this be just another summit of statements. Bold, unprecedented action must follow. As for me, the meaning of celebrating Madiba is to work to end this senseless violence as a matter of priority and urgency. I encourage the Assembly to interrogate and dismantle what is fuelling these conflicts — ego-driven decision-makers, rigid political dogmas, greedy acquisition of resources and the massive arms industry, to name just a few. It is time for every leader here to take responsibility — those who are directly involved in the atrocities plaguing our world, those who take sides and those who sit in silence. As the leaders of our time, they have a moral imperative, and the ability, to bring to an end the death and destruction we witness on a daily basis. Colombia has proved it can be done. Others can follow that example. History will judge those here should they stagnate too long in inaction. Humankind will hold them accountable should they allow suffering to continue on our watch.

I am speaking as a woman who has experienced first-hand the pain and misery of war. In 1996, on behalf of then-Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, I published a report (see A/51/306) on the devastating impact of armed conflict on children. My colleagues and I embarked on two years of research that took us to conflict settings in every corner of the globe. I was just a mother then, horrified by stories of frightened children and grief-stricken mothers in refugee and displaced-person camps. Today I am a grandmother, still haunted by their eyes and still sitting with a heavy heart, knowing that the fate of children in conflict settings has gotten worse. The voice of a Palestinian child still whispers to me, asking "When is this is going to end?" And I know that that boy, now a young person, is still in a Palestinian refugee camp.

We cannot rest until we right these wrongs. And to do so we must work more collaboratively with those beyond this Hall. We therefore actively support Secretary-General António Guterres in putting peace at the top of his agenda. Peacemaking requires more than a political response; it also requires the muscle of the private sector, civil-society organizations and citizens at the grass roots as well. For example, 25 years ago, the African institution ACCORD was established to contribute to resolving Africa's conflicts so as to create the conditions necessary for human security, economic prosperity and social cohesion. Today, after working on almost all of Africa's protracted conflicts, we know that working for peace alone will not deliver those goals. Peace, together with governance and development, is the only approach that can ensure stability. In July of this year, therefore, President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa and ACCORD launched a new initiative, Global Peace, to take ACCORD's experience from Africa and the global South and extend our solidarity across the world. Global Peace will make a modest contribution to transforming how nations drive development and stability. It will promote an ecosystem of innovators, influencers, investors and the implementers to generate innovative solutions to the challenges of our time. This civil-society initiative will complement the efforts of Governments and multilateral agencies and strengthen multilateralism.

When Madiba founded The Elders in 2007, he gave us a specific mandate:

> "To support courage where there is fear; to force agreement where there is conflict; and to inspire hope where there is despair".

We Elders spent the past year leading up to Madiba's hundredth birthday identifying and showcasing 100 inspirational civil-society organizations of all sizes and from every part of the world. Each of those 100 organizations represents one of 100 ideas for a freer, fairer world. They work with a commitment to finding what unites their communities, and through collective efforts they are achieving peace, justice, health and equality in their communities. On behalf of The Elders, I have the honour to present to the General Assembly an inspiring publication featuring these "Sparks of Hope", which I will hand to President Espinosa Garcés and Secretary-General Guterres when I conclude my remarks. This compendium highlights the moral courage and leadership of change agents across the world, and I hope members will take inspiration from their work to accelerate social transformation.

In conclusion, I challenge the Assembly with Madiba's words: "It is in your hands to make a better world for all who live in it". It is therefore incumbent on us to live up to the cherished Charter of the United Nations, which asks us to

> "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and untold sorrow to mankind and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

And I quote Madiba again: "It is in your hands".

The President: I thank Ms. Machel for her statement and for the 100 "Sparks of Hope".

(*spoke in Spanish*)

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/243, I now give the floor to Mr. Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

Mr. Naidoo (Amnesty International): We welcome the broad sentiments in the draft political declaration that Governments have agreed on for the Mandela Peace Summit. But the truth is that we have heard them before. These are the words that get repeated time and time again without the political will, urgency, determination or courage needed to make them a reality and to make them really count. But we must make them count — not tomorrow, but right now, because we are facing multiple crises around the world with people suffering on an unimaginable scale. Without action, without strong and principal leadership, I fear for them and for all of us.

Let us remember that Madiba spent the vast majority of his life as a civil-society activist. Yet as we gather here to honour him today, thousands of activists and human rights defenders around the world are imprisoned or have been tortured or killed. They include trade unionists, people from non-governmental organizations, social movements and religious communities, journalists and those from the field of the arts and culture. In far too many countries, the civic space has been shut down and people deprived of their right to participate actively and freely in public life.

The Preamble to the founding Charter of the United Nations opens with the words "We the peoples", not "we Member States". That is why we, the people, should never allow ourselves to accept injustice. As Martin Luther King once said,

> "I never intend to adjust myself to racial segregation and discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few when millions of God's children are smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in affluent societies."

I appeal to the General Assembly today, with the spirit of Madiba surrounding us all, not to adjust to the inhumane way that we have been treating millions of refugees around the world, not to adjust to the Rohingya population living in an open-air prison under a system of apartheid, not to adjust to the Palestinians in Gaza living under a relentless military blockade that keeps them in poverty and misery, not to adjust to the centuries-old subjugation of indigenous peoples, not to adjust to leaders who espouse xenophobic and fascist narratives or demean or undermine women.

Neither should we adjust to the bloodbaths we have seen in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan and elsewhere, especially when most of the people shedding the blood are civilians and a large proportion of them are women and children. We should not adjust to the systematic exclusion of people living with disabilities or to the continuing struggle and marginalization of children and young people everywhere, for humankind must not judge itself by the progress of the most powerful but by the welfare of the most vulnerable. Indeed, we must take care not only of the present generation but those of the future as well. We should not adjust to the dismal failure of the powerful to protect civilians in conflicts. In particular, we must not adjust to the deadlock that continues to haunt the Security Council, whose five permanent members too often use their powers not to prevent and stop suffering, but to shield themselves and others committing the worst crimes.

We should not adjust to the disgraceful levels of impunity we see, and we should insist on full accountability for gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity. On this, the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the twentieth anniversary of the Rome Statute, which gave birth to the International Criminal Court, we urge a renewed respect for the painstakingly developed conventions and norms of the United Nations. We call on nations that have not yet done so to join the International Criminal Court, particularly three permanent members of the Security Council — the United States, China and Russia.

We should not adjust to the continued inaction on averting catastrophic climate change while thousands are regularly devastated by extreme weather events from the Philippines to Puerto Rico, where we saw more than 3,000 lives lost, making it the biggest natural disaster in United States history. Neither, for that matter, should we adjust to the imminent reality facing small island States, whose very existence is under threat. To the one leader who still denies climate change, we insist that he start putting himself on the right side of history.

To my brothers and sisters I say, the time for bold and courageous action is now. I know what my fellow activists and advocates are facing, but I implore them not to give up. Let the words of Madiba inspire and guide us: "The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear". And to all our political leaders, I want to say that we honour Madiba by picking up the mantle, honestly and with integrity, of all the struggles he waged. The draft political declaration (A/73/L.1) to be adopted here today is an opportunity for renewed commitment in these troubled times. I say, let us think of the most powerless people in the world, those who will live or die as a consequence of our choices — and let us not disappoint them.

The President: I thank Mr. Naidoo for his statement.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

We have heard the last speaker for the opening meeting of the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit.

The Assembly will now turn to draft resolution A/73/L.1, entitled "Political declaration adopted at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit". In the light of the time constraints and in order to ensure the expeditious conduct of proceedings, delegations wishing to make explanations of position are kindly encouraged to do so in their statements to be delivered in the debate and/or to submit them for circulation as official documents.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/73/L.1, entitled "Political declaration adopted at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit". May I take it that the assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/73/L.1?

Draft resolution A/73/L.1 was adopted (resolution 73/1).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my sincere thanks to His Excellency Mr. Jerry Matjila, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, and Her Excellency Ms. Geraldine Byrne Nason, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, who ably and patiently conducted the discussions and complex negotiations in the informal consultations on the resolution 73/1. I am sure the members of the Assembly join me in expressing our sincere appreciation to them.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.